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THE CHAIRMAN & SPEAKER'S GUIDE.

"Order, Order; Order."

THOMAS SMITH.

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SMITH'S

CHAIRMAN AND SPEAKER'S GUIDE.

THE

CHAIRMAN

AND

SPEAKER'S GUIDE

BEING A BRIEF DIGEST OF THE

RULES REQUIRED FOR THE EFFICIENT AND ORDERLY CONDUCT OF A DEBATE

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

AN ESSAY ON PUBLIC MEETINGS

MANNER OF PROCEEDING WITH REGARD TO THEM

ETC.

NEW EDITION

REVISED AND IMPROVED

BY THOMAS SMITH

AUTHOR OF "EVOLUTION OF NUMBERS," ETC.

"ORDER, ORDER; ORDER."

BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA

LIVERPOOL

EDWARD HOWELL

1876.

260 . g . 344.

TO THE READER.

With much pleasure the author has availed himself of the opportunity of reprinting his work, to make some improvements, and a few additions, which he ventures to believe will be found both useful and interesting.

TO THE

MEN OF ENGLAND, IRELAND, AND SCOTLAND.

FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

Accept this attempt of my hands to produce a Digest of those heretofore unwritten Rules, by which you so meritoriously seek to govern your proceedings in those assemblages of Clubs, Societies, Committees, Councils, and Public Meetings, by which you are, happily, distinguished above the inhabitants of other countries.

May you continue to cherish and to cultivate this rational, this equitable, this peaceful and manly method of adjusting your differences, of maintaining your rights, and of maturing and accomplishing your various designs for the advancement of yourselves, and for the prosperity and glory of our Country!

THE AUTHOR.

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ORDER OR COURSE OF PROCEEDING TO BE OBSERVED IN PUBLIC MEETINGS,

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But if the Report be designed for publication, then the first motion after reading it should be,—"That the Report be adopted," which, if agreed to, its insertion on the Minutes would follow as a matter of course; and the second motion should be,—"That the Report be printed and published."

THIRD.— A Report having been read,—On a motion "That it be received," or, "That it be adopted," any member of the Meeting to whom it may not be satisfactory, may with perfect propriety seek either to set it altogether aside, by moving "That its further consideration be postponed to"—*(any indefinite or impracticable period)*—or may move to have it referred back to the committee to be reconsidered, or to be amended according to certain instructions then to be proposed and agreed to.

And, further to insure such revision and amendment, motions may very properly be made and received to add other members to the committee.

FOURTH.— That which is said above respecting the method to be observed in the adoption or the amendment of a Report, is to be our guide in the case of an Address, or Memorial, or Petition, designed to be published or presented. A committee having been appointed with instructions to prepare an Address or Petition; on such paper being brought before the Meeting, the first Motion should be, "That it be adopted." On which, as an Amendment, it may be moved, "That it be referred back to the Committee, in order to be amended, &c., as laid down in the foregoing Article.

THE CHAIRMAN
AND
SPEAKER'S GUIDE, &c

PRELIMINARY ESSAY ON PUBLIC MEETINGS.

1. Order, in the conduct of our affairs, whether those affairs be of a public or private nature, is highly conducive, if not requisite, to success; and this, too, in affairs of every description. But, in no transaction is the maintenance of order more beneficial, or its absence more injurious, or more annoying, than in the conduct and proceedings of those assemblages of men, whether great or small, which so frequently take place amongst us in these kingdoms; assemblages for the purpose of discussing questions, and of determining on courses of conduct.

2. If order reign at one of these meetings, and this order be the genuine result of good

sense and skill in the person who presides, and of good temper and sobriety of conduct on the part of those who compose the assemblage, there is scarcely anything in human character and conduct more truly worthy of our admiration and applause.

3. A number of men assemble, they are called together for the purpose of deliberating on some question, of adopting some resolution, or of determining on some course of conduct. The matter which they assemble to discuss is previously announced to them; each has, more or less, considered it, and each has formed something of an opinion of the decision which, on his view of it, ought to take place. This, where party views and selfish interests do not operate, is the state of mind in which the greater part of persons, on such occasions, assemble; each has generally some opinion on the matter, and their opinions differ; but, like sensible and well-disposed men, conscious of having but slightly considered the matter, they

come to be informed, to hear the different opinions, and the reasons; to be instructed, and then to decide. This is the feeling, this the state of mind, in which the greater part of our countrymen, on such occasions, assemble; men of this kind generally form the main body of our meetings.

4. But there are some, generally, but inconsiderable in point of number, who attend with other feelings, and with other views. Some two or three, perhaps, have well considered the matter to be debated; have, possibly, made themselves entire masters of it, and actuated by perfectly pure and generous motives, are capable of instructing, and entitled to lead, the assemblage, on the case in question. Such men there are; and if there be ambition in them, the ambition even to distinguish themselves somewhat above their fellows, the ambition to take their proper station on the occasion; that spirit which urges a man to great efforts,

and which sustains him in difficult and in trying situations, if he do not suffer it to consume the time of the meeting, nor to impede, nor to impair the good work, that spirit of ambition is, of all our frailties, surely the least censurable.

5. However, there are men with other feelings, and with other views, than these of which we have spoken. And then, too, there are obliquities of mind, and irregularities of temper, in endless variety. Were meetings composed of men entirely such as the two classes first described, order and good temper would pervade them, and pleasing recollections would follow them. And all these, without any peculiar knowledge or skill on the part of the presiding chairman.

6. But we are not always well-disposed, willing to learn, generous and wise in our purposes, and well-informed on the means of carrying those purposes into effect. There

are ends to be promoted, persons to be advanced, vanity to be gratified, crude and imperfect views to be promulgated, and feebleness and incapacity of mind or of utterance to be indulged: and these qualities, too, are so intermixed, the good and the bad, they exist in such various degrees, and are sometimes so nicely blended, and so disguised even from the possessor himself, that there is, in the outset of a debate, no means of interdicting the bad, although there are methods, certainly, of encouraging, and of bringing forward the good qualities existing amongst the persons assembled.

7. However, as good qualities may be encouraged and brought forward, so bad ones, although not to be interdicted, may be checked and repressed. Both of which purposes are to be accomplished by vigilance and skill, by impartiality of conduct, and by a natural fitness for his office, on the part of the chairman.

8. The whole, however, does not depend on the chairman. There must be substance, there must be numbers, there must be a body of persons, such as those I have referred to in the third paragraph; persons having no partial interests to promote, no whims to gratify, no humours to indulge; there must be a body of well-disposed persons of this description in every meeting; and these too sufficiently numerous to restrain by their presence the earliest appearance of improper temper, and to discountenance and repress a levity of conduct, to which vain and light-minded persons are often inclined, by which levity the time of an assemblage is but too often wasted; there must be a body of persons of this description, large in proportion to the interests at stake, or no skill, nor any fitness for his office, can enable a chairman to preserve order. But, happily, our assemblages generally exhibit such a body.

9. Meetings, to consist of whom they may,

and for whatever business called, must be convened without any sinister purpose, must be convened in a spirit of broad justice; or there can be no security for their orderly conduct. Some prudence is likewise required to prevent an injurious and profitless collision of hostile parties. Various are the motives and the purposes of men. Meetings are sometimes surreptitiously convened, sometimes *packed*, as it is called; and sometimes composed of two hostile parties. In meetings of the first description, that is, in meetings packed for the purpose of carrying some previously concerted measure, there may be quietness; it is collusion; but it is not order. And in a meeting composed entirely or chiefly of hostile parties, that is to say, of two parties having an established hostility towards each other, and without a third to keep them in check; in a meeting of this description, rival feelings and sinister purposes will soon disclose themselves, resentments, accusations, and recriminations will arise, and it will be scarcely possible, by

any efforts, or by any skill, on the part of a chairman, to prevent the angry feelings from rising into a storm.

10. It is clearly obvious that persons or parties thus circumstanced, thus disposed towards each other, ought scarcely ever to be convened for the purpose of discussing any matter; certainly not for the purpose of discussing the point in dispute between them; nor any point bearing any relation thereto. They may come before referees, or before a court of law, just to be asked questions. Individuals thus hostile towards each other may, also, happen to meet, without being particularly convened, and so get into collision; and being but individuals, each surrounded by numbers who are not partizans, nor prepared to countenance deviations from order and good temper, thus circumstanced, even hostile individuals may encounter each other, and on some tender points, and by a discerning and skilful chairman, they may be reined in, and

prevented from casting a meeting into disorder. But the hazard, and the difficulty, are great. And such situations, even under circumstances so well calculated to repress angry feelings, and consequent disorder, ought always to be avoided.

11. Three, or more parties, having questions in dispute amongst them, may, and indeed, often and necessarily do assemble; when, there being three, or more parties, if any two of them get into angry collision, the third party will naturally act as umpire. There is a general disposition amongst us to see justice done, and to aid in the preservation of order; and thus will the third party be ready to assist in checking incipient disorder. But that third party must have, in their chairman, a steady, skilful, and impartial head.

12. However, the assembling together of well-known hostile parties is an error into

which persons who take upon themselves to convene meetings seldom fall. Where it has liberty of choice, the convening party is much more apt, for obvious reasons, to limit the terms of the invitation, so that the assemblage shall consist of persons having similar views, with the addition only of such as, from their easiness of disposition, or diffidence of themselves and of their own judgment, may augment the numbers, but will not be likely to endanger, nor to disturb any of the purposes or the proceedings of those who project and who call the meeting. A meeting convened in this spirit, where, by the terms of the invitation, persons are excluded who have an interest in the purposes for which it is called, and a legitimate right to be present and to take part in the proceedings, a meeting convened in this spirit, is a packed meeting. It is a kind of conspiracy. Meetings are frequently called thus, under the pretext of securing peace, of averting disturbance; and well-disposed but weak-minded

men may acquiesce in the plot. But they are conspiracies against all those who are excluded; and, indeed, conspiracies against such of them as are assembled, such of them as are too simple to enter into the plot, and too weak to oppose it, or to secure for themselves some of the profits to arise therefrom.

13. Similar to convenings of this sort are the measures which are not infrequently taken for excluding persons, not from the meeting, but from taking any part in the proceedings.

14. For instance: a meeting is deemed desirable, for some purpose or other. It would not answer the schemes of those who convene it, to limit, to exclude, by the very terms of the requisition, beyond a certain mark, the persons to be invited. To do so would be to make it a meeting of a mere clique or party, and so to excite public derision; and so to frustrate the whole plot. To answer the purpose of the schemers, the

invitation must be open enough to admit persons whom they cannot hope to blind and render subservient to their purposes; persons, in short, whom they cannot enlist into the plot. But then, measures are to be employed to prevent or to restrain such persons from interfering. There can be no security for the order and good conduct of a meeting convened with these views, no security, save in an immediate surrender of all sinister purposes on the part of those who have convened it, in the event of any person appearing, and by some amendment, or other counter motion, demanding such surrender.

15. In the precepts, which in the sequel, I shall have to give for the conduct of meetings, I may take occasion to allude to such as may be called thus for sinister purposes; and to such as may be called in a surreptitious manner. But any suggestions of mine will, I trust, tend not to their orderly and successful conduct, but to their exposure and discomfiture.

16. Meetings, to consist of whom they may, and called for whatever business, must be convened without any sinister purpose; must be convened in a spirit of broad justice. There must be no exclusion of persons entitled, equally as are those who call the meeting, to be present; no partial, no clandestine notices of, or invitations to, the meeting. Nor can any contrivances, or arrangements be permitted, by which certain individuals shall be favoured above others, in opportunities of addressing the meeting, and of offering, if they please, amendments, and of making motions. Arrangements may be made, as we shall see hereafter, for the due conduct of a meeting, and for the convenience of those presenting themselves to take part in its proceedings. But there can be no exclusions, no partiality, save at the peril of the peace and order of the meeting.

17. No exclusions, nor any partialities, I mean, not merely as it regards persons invited,

and persons admitted to the meeting, but no partialities nor exclusions in favour of particular persons appointed by those who make the arrangements, to take part in the proceedings; and against others, who may be equally entitled, but who may happen to have no such appointment. There must, I repeat it, be no exclusions, nor any partial arrangements of this sort, save at the hazard of disorder and discomfiture.

18. For all such arrangements and contrivances are, not merely illiberal and inequitable; they are an affront, an audacious and personal affront, to the understanding and to the feelings, of every man present, who is not of the party of the contrivers. For what; if we translate into words, the acts, the contrivances and the arrangements: what do these acts say? They say this to the uninitiated persons present: Not "Gentlemen;" but, "Simplemen! you are called together, at this time and in this place, for

the purpose of listening to us, the wise and able men who have thus assembled you, to listen, whilst we propound to you certain measures, which it is our wish, our interest, or our fancy—but which of these, is nothing to you, and the whole is beyond your comprehension—but it is our fancy to propound and thus to promulgate these things, and our design is to have your sanction of them. So hold up your hands, simplemen! You shall have these propositions, and nothing else; nor shall a man amongst you call in question, nor gainsay a single step we are taking, or a word that we may be pleased to utter." Now this is a fair translation of arrangements as I have not infrequently witnessed.

19. It is true, that but few persons, amongst those who attend such meetings, are thus inclined to translate the language of preparations and contrivances; and therefore do meetings thus managed, very fre-

quently, as the phrase is, "*go off very well.*" But woe be to the contrivances, and to the peaceful "*going off*" of such a meeting, if an interpreter of them, of any spirit, happen to be present. There is always danger of such an affront offered to a meeting being resented; and this may on any such occasion, be effectually done by either of two ways; namely, by the moving of a proposition that is just and sensible; or by a direct exposition of the motives and contrivances of those who have taken upon themselves the surreptitious management of the affair.

20. Let meetings, then, be called in a proper spirit, and without any sinister, any partial or selfish purposes. Let not the projectors of them imagine themselves wiser or better than their neighbours. Let them not call meetings for the advancement of their own importance; nor imagine that their neighbours, even though they be generally blind as to the design, ought to be converted

into their instruments or stepping-stones. In short, let those who take upon them to call meetings of their countrymen, examine well their own hearts; let them see that they are not actuated by any vain or selfish purpose; let them be quite sure, that it is their great, and almost sole wish, to cause truth to prevail, and justice to be done. And then will they run small risk of incurring the just resentment of their neighbours, or of plunging themselves into a scene of confusion and disgrace.

21. I am here, of course, contemplating PUBLIC MEETINGS, in the large sense of the words. With regard to meetings of joint proprietors, of shareholders, of councils, committees, and of such bodies of persons, the parties concerned in them require no suggestions as to the spirit and manner in which they are to be convened. Suggestions may be acceptable, precepts may be useful, for the proper and orderly conduct of them: but

every member of them knows his rights, and will be sufficiently active in claiming and in enforcing those rights; a trespass on which is not merely a breach of order and decorum, but is, if duly resisted by the sufferer, ground for invalidating all the proceedings connected with such trespass.

22. It is in the convening, and in the conducting of occasional public meetings; public in the more extensive sense of the word, that men are tempted to seek to stifle, or to violate the rights of others. Such designs must of course originate in selfish views of some sort. It may be interest, sordid interest. But the ambitious views of party, or the vanity of individuals, are quite sufficient. The design is formed by some two or three of the more active spirits: they are generally, almost invariably, men of some consideration amongst their neighbours; they have either rank, or title, or reputation for wealth, or for learning. One or more of these qualities,

will enable a few men to find co-operators amongst the weak-minded and the vain of their neighbours, who will deem it an honour to be selected and employed. And thus the scheme grows. On such occasions, the precept most assiduously inculcated amongst the party engaged in assembling the meeting, is, that the whole affair is to be "*managed;*" that the people are to be assembled, for the purposes of forming an animating auditory to the speakers and of giving weight to the proceedings, but that the people are an ignorant mass, and must be "*managed;*" that, although appealed to, and to all appearance argued or reasoned with, they are to be allowed no opportunity of choosing between this or that; for every thing, save this which the managers please to propound to them, is to be carefully kept from them. That, in short, the whole is an affair of *management.* And as every man knows that in their individual and personal duties, great numbers of ordinary people are not very intelligent

nor accommodating, so the weak and the vain, men who are incapable of discriminating between individuals and the great body of the people; men who impute to that great body, and even to that meritorious part of the body which takes an interest in public affairs; weak and vain men who thus impute the same stupidity and vices to large assemblages of men, as those which perhaps annoy them in their servile and inservile domestic tormentors; weak men, who do not see that at a public meeting, stupidity may be aroused to reflection, selfish and unjust and brutal desires repressed, a generous spirit created, and wise and prudent resolves adopted; weak-minded men who do not, who cannot see that our nature is not irredeemably base, brutal, and ignorant, give into the scheme for *management*, and become active and zealous co-operators in all those measures by which the people are to be mocked; mocked with a pretence of being assembled for the purpose of deliberating, and of exercising their judgment, The

people, that is to say, great numbers of them when enlisted and arrayed on the side of a party, may thus be practised upon. But it is an insult to the public, and an injury to the nation. And no gentleman of honour will lend himself to any part of such a proceeding.

23. The great body of the people may have their vices and their follies, but there is no vice more audacious, and none much more mischievous in its effects, than an artifice of the description spoken of. I have, in paragraph 18, translated the act into words. The state of mind in which such a scheme must be first conceived, can be no other than an overweening self-conceit of great intellectual superiority; and a notion that, in consideration of this superiority, the multitude, who are ignorant and dull of apprehension, are to be used as mere instruments.

24. For the peaceful and orderly conduct of an assemblage convened in this spirit, and

attempted to be thus practised upon, there is, as before stated, no security. So let us proceed to the consideration of the straightforward, the frank, the honest, and the honourable course; that is to say, to the consideration of the method to be pursued, and the rules to be observed in the convening, and in the conducting of a public meeting, where no vain or sinister purposes are entertained.

25. Here every movement should be made, every step taken, in perfect good faith with ourselves and with all concerned. And on drawing up a requisition, or other form of invitation to a projected meeting, having the purpose of it in view, we determine, *first;* who are the parties that are, or that may be, interested in that purpose; and, *second;* whether we shall request all these parties, or only a certain class, or certain classes of them to attend. Having determined these questions, we draw up the requisition accordingly; accurately and explicitly designating

the parties invited. For example: Is it a town's meeting that is to be convened; that is, all the inhabitants,—which of course means all the male inhabitants arrived at years of discretion—then let "THE INHABITANTS" be requested to attend; and requested in such terms of courtesy as you may choose to employ, as "The Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, and other Inhabitants." These terms, or any of them, according to the occasion, the circumstances, and your own taste. Is it to be a meeting of the inhabitants of the town and its vicinity? Then say so; drawing up the requisition accordingly.

26. Again: Is it to be a meeting of a part, a party, section, or other division? Let such part or party be specified. For instance: Is it the merchants and bankers you would convene; or the merchants and traders? Then say so. Is it some religious sect or division? Specify such sect, in the terms of courtesy by which it is usually described.

27. However, instead of directly convening the meeting themselves, the projectors may prefer an application to some public officer; as the High Constable or the Mayor of a Town; or the High Sheriff of a County. In such a case a document, usually called a Requisition, is to be drawn up; addressed to such officer, in the most courteous terms, with the title or titles due to him; respectfully requesting that he will be pleased, on as early a day as may be, to call a meeting of the persons whom it is desirable to assemble, and for the purpose contemplated: which purpose, of course, and the class of persons to be assembled, are to be both set forth in terms, general, but correct; accurate, but not minute. The drawing up of such a document, the terms in which it is couched, are of the greatest importance, because if the officer to whom it is addressed comply with it, and convene the meeting, it is his duty to do so in the very words of the Requisition delivered to him, without even the alteration of a point.

28. This duty of a public officer who may receive a requisition to call a meeting; the duty of calling it, if he do call it at all, in the precise terms of such requisition, is obvious, and imperative. For any alteration in that respect, any alteration of the meaning of the words, however slight, would make it a meeting of his own projection; would be a discourteous and dishonourable treatment of the requisitionists, such as no gentleman would be guilty of. But if any man were guilty of making such an alteration, the requisitionists would be fairly entitled to attend and to upbraid him on his own bench.

29. On drawing up a requisition, then, to a magistrate, or other public officer, to convene a meeting, the same considerations are to be our guide as must govern us were we about to call the meeting ourselves: that is to say, we must frankly and clearly describe the persons to be invited, and so far as it can be done in a few words, the purpose for which

we would have them assembled. There is no difficulty, however, in doing such a thing properly. It is not talent that is required. It needs nothing but honesty, nothing but integrity of purpose; and then the common sense of every man is quite sufficient. He knows whom it is that he wishes to assemble, and knows what it is for. And he has only to state these things, in the plainest and most unaffected terms.

30. Sometimes a meeting is projected, and a determination to call it is formed, but as a point of etiquette, or for some other reason, it is deemed advisable previously to request the Mayor, or other public officer, to call it. Need I hint how improper it would be, in such a case, on the part of those who have determined on the meeting, to cause any intimation of such determination to be communicated to the officer to whom the requisition is to be presented? Such an intimation would, of course, be a threat. And it would

be the duty of that officer, as it is the duty of every man to scorn a needless threat, to reject the requisition without ceremony. However, such determination to convene a meeting cannot be formed by a number of persons without being spoken of amongst them, of which speaking, should it reach the ears of the officer, it would ill become him to take notice.

31. A public meeting being appointed, a preliminary or preparatory meeting of those persons with whom the affair originated generally becomes desirable

32. These preparative meetings are almost always necessary. The conveners of a meeting ought, of course, to make preparations; they ought to prepare measures to be submitted to the meeting, and to make every other arrangement for its orderly and efficient conduct. Such as ascertaining who of right shall preside at the chief meeting; or on whom,

in the event of its being a matter of choice, it will be desirable to confer the appointment; what resolutions or other documents shall be proposed by them, and what other steps, such as adjournments, appointments of secretaries, committees, and so forth. To fix on movers and seconders, for every proposition to be made; and in short, to make every arrangement, and to provide for every probable contingency; so that the business of the meeting shall go forward, and its objects be accomplished, without waiting for spontaneous and adventitious aid from other persons. Preparations and arrangements of this nature, it is, of course, the duty of those to make, who project, and who request a meeting; it is their duty to make such preparations, or to see that they be made.

33. To this end a meeting of the projectors or conveners, aided by such other persons as they may choose to call in, is the proper step to be taken. At such meeting, however small,

an observance, even a rigid observance, of all the nicest rules of debate is incumbent on the parties. The meeting is small in number, but it consists chiefly of the more active spirits; of the projectors, each of whom, whatever he may be in reality, generally deems himself qualified to instruct and to guide the whole. Such men submit with difficulty even to salutary and necessary restraint; they are restless and jealous; and irregular treatment not merely provokes, but furnishes them with good ground of complaint. And to this complaint they may give utterance, to the disturbance of the meeting, and to the disparagement of the chairman, or may brood over the injurious treatment in murmurs and discontent.

34. It would be an error, therefore, to suppose, that less skill in a chairman, and a less rigid observance of the rules of debate, are requisite for the management of one of these preliminary meetings, because it is small;

or indeed, that less care and skill are required for the guidance of almost any small meeting, than are required for the conducting of a large one. Less of nerve may be required, in those who take part in them, and less power of voice is required; and it must be allowed that errors committed in small meetings, are frequently to be rectified with less difficulty than errors committed in large assemblages. But it is a serious error to enter on the business of a small meeting, under an impression that the rules for its conduct may be dispensed with. This error, as every man must have observed, has been very prevalent; and a consequence has been, that in general, the smaller the meeting, and the greater the consumption of time in the transaction of business.

35. ORDER, then, which is indispensable to the just and creditable discharge of all our duties, is always indispensable in the conduct of a body of men, whether large or small, assembled for the purpose of considering, of

regulating, and of determining on, some course of conduct or proceeding, either in themselves or in others.

36. Let us then proceed to consider of, and endeavour to establish, in a series of succinct rules, the method by which, whether at large or at small meetings, this indispensable requisite, ORDER, is to be instituted and preserved.

OF THE CHAIRMAN.

MANNER OF ELECTION, OR APPOINTMENT.

37. On this officer depends, mainly, the order and the efficiency of a meeting. It is too much the custom to confer the office as a sort of compliment, as a mark of respect to the man. And as rank, with the possession, or reputed possession, of wealth, is held in respect, so some one of the persons present, more distinguished than the rest by a quality of this kind, is usually selected. Reputation for learning, or for talent, come in for their share of consideration; and ripeness of years, and gentlemanly deportment and conduct, have their weight. All this is very well. Men do look, will look, and indeed ought to look, amongst the possessors of these distinguishing characteristics, for their leaders, their representatives, and their presidents. And if they find, in one of these possessors, the qualities which fit a man for the office in question, they act wisely in selecting him.

38. To confine ourselves, however, to the selection of a man for the office of chairman of a meeting in which a debate is to be held.

39. It is desirable, nay it is necessary to the good conduct of the meeting, that the chairman be held in respect. It will not do to nominate a man to such an office, as is not infrequently done, out of mere personal compliment; done too frequently by some pert and forward hanger-on; sometimes to repay obligations already received, or to bespeak expected favours. It will not do thus to suffer impertinence to usurp the office, to place its idol in the chair, and so to lower the respectability, to consume the time, and to impair or destroy the efficiency of the meeting.

40. The chairman ought to be a man previously held in respect; but at all events, he must be treated with respect whilst he is in the office; and his authority, his decisions, must be upheld, must be enforced by the

meeting, or there can be no order. However, the chairman must be held in respect.

41. There is something, nay there is much in the personal appearance, and in the years of a man, by which the respect of an assemblage is to be raised and preserved; his known station and habits of life, come next into consideration; and then his fitness for the office, which is instantly perceived and felt by a meeting.

42. This fitness for the office is certainly the main thing. Imposing and gentlemanly appearance, habits of command in private life, the possession of wealth and of title, of learning, and even of talents, sink, all sink into nothing, when the man is placed in a situation for which he is not, and for which he, and every person present, feels that he is not fitted. Whilst, on the contrary, the fitting man, although devoid of all external aids of person and of fortune, without reputation for

talents or for learning, but having a knowledge of the duties, of the business of the office; having a mind clear, not liable to be disturbed; a man thus self-possessed, with appearances and prepossessions against him, will often disperse, or emerge, from the difficulties, and make the assemblage forget the man, in the dignity and the importance of the office.

43. Such entire fitness for the office of chairman is not, it must be confessed, often to be found. However, in every assemblage of our countrymen we may find some of these qualities; some of these mental qualifications. And if we find them in a man respectable for his years, and his personal appearance, let them be preferred; if, with these, we find wealth, honourably inherited or acquired, and liberally enjoyed, still better; and lastly, if, in addition to the possession of these qualifications, we can find for our chairman a man in the enjoyment of high station, and of rank in society, then shall we have every reasonable security for the

pleasant, the orderly, and the efficient conduct of a meeting. Whilst, on the contrary, when a man is thrust into the office just to subserve the views of an officious individual or party, without any natural or acquired personal fitness for it, his incapacity stands in need of so many advisers, so many volunteer their aid, he gets so many participators in his office, petty and self-appointed chairmen spring up in every quarter of the meeting, which soon, instead of becoming an orderly assemblage, degenerates into a disorganized mob; and would, after wrangling and quarrelling, disperse as such, were it not for the determined perseverance of some few energetic men, who may take the imbecile chairman into their hands, and by pushing him through one step after another, get through the business of the meeting, with or without the knowledge or concurrence of the greater part of the persons present.

44. To avoid catastrophes of this kind, and to obtain at least some of the satisfactory

results, and attendant circumstances of an orderly and well conducted meeting, let every man, on his first entrance into it, and until the chairman be appointed, look about him, and be prepared instantly to name the most suitable person, in his estimation, for the office. Thus will each man be prepared to do his duty on this preliminary and important point. Being thus prepared, each individual may wait until the lapse of the moment when the appointment is to take place. Then, of course, some person ought to propose a chairman, or if there be some sufficient reason for deferring such proposition for a short time, it will be an act of acceptable kindness on the part of any gentleman, in an audible voice to address a few words to the assemblage, stating, in his opinion, such reason, and proposing, in distinct terms not an indefinite time, not "*a few minutes*," nor "*ten minutes or a quarter of an hour.*" But a definite time. So that the persons present may know exactly their time; may know the moment to which the business

of the meeting is adjourned, and not be left at the mercy of any tricky party who might mould the meeting to almost any shape or purpose, by taking advantage of an indefinite adjournment; which is, in fact, and ought always to be regarded as, a breaking up, or dissolution of the meeting.

45. The moment for business having arrived, the moment for the appointment of a chairman, some one of the meeting names a gentleman for the office. Let not this disconcert any man. It is above all others, the moment on which the order and respectability of the meeting depends: and let each man, who is a lover of order, be prepared to do his duty. If he be the man on whom you have fixed, second the nomination with all decent expedition; but if not, if you think you have set your eye on a more eligible man, just allow time, and not an instant longer than is requisite; just allow time for such a seconding, and then, whether the first nomination be

seconded or not, in as firm a voice as you are master of, nominate the gentleman whom you have chosen.

46. Let it not be imagined that such a nomination of a second, a third, a fourth, or a fifth gentlemen, for this office, is any mark of disrespect towards any one. You may not know the gentleman or gentlemen, already nominated: or knowing, may know nothing of his, of their, fitness for the office; whilst you may know that the gentlemen on whom you have fixed, is a very eligible person; perhaps a very able chairman. You submit his name, therefore, to the meeting; desirous that this meeting, of which you are a member, should have the benefit of his skill and impartiality. The nomination of a second, of a third, or of a fourth gentleman for the office, whilst it is the best service that any man, at this time, can render to the meeting, seeing that it offers to that meeting a choice, on a point of so much importance; whilst it is the best service that

any man can render to the meeting, is, as before stated, no mark of disrespect towards any gentleman previously named. There can be no honour in being appointed to an office, when there is no choice. So let me be elected from amongst others, says every man who is at all qualified for the office, and worthy of presiding amongst his neighbours.

47. To return to the important process of appointing a chairman.—A gentleman has been named; you have allowed time—a distinct moment must be sufficient—for the nomination to be seconded; and then, having previously fixed on a gentleman whom you know to be qualified for the office, or whom you prefer, in a distinct and audible voice, you name him. A moment's pause, such as was before allowed, in courtesy, in decency, in justice, ought to be allowed for the seconding of such nomination; and then, another gentleman may, with perfect propriety, be nominated in like manner; and another, and another. The meeting will now

have a choice. And if these pauses be allowed, and the nominations be made distinctly, it will soon be seen, soon be heard, on which gentleman the choice of the meeting rests. And such a course of proceeding, even if four or five gentlemen be thus nominated, will not require more than a single minute, and will be a happy presage of an orderly course of proceeding throughout.

48. As it is a duty incumbent on the persons assembled, to listen to the nominations, and to allow the moment's silence requisite for the seconding so does this state of things impose a duty on the persons who may be nominated to the office of chairman. This duty, without the observance of which there will be disorder; this duty is silence, and an acquiescence in the decision of the meeting. Disclaimers; protests of unfitness, of indisposition, of the superior claims of others; in short, speeches of any sort, however brief, ought to be carefully avoided until there be a

chairman seated, and the meeting thereby organized. It does not follow, because a gentleman is nominated to the office of chairman, that he will be appointed. So that each gentleman, so named, may with perfect propriety, and indeed, ought to remain silent; leaving it to the meeting, who best know whom to prefer, to make its choice. If indeed, it do happen, that owing to the state of health, or to any other circumstances, the gentleman selected have some insuperable objection to undertaking the duties of the office, as it is desirable above all things, that the meeting be organized with as little delay as possible, still let such gentleman take the chair, and from that position, as briefly as he pleases, allege his objection and prevail on the meeting to choose another chairman, during which he will preside, and render his best assistance.

49. There being now a chairman, the meeting being now organized, may, and ought to have the question, on each subsequent nomina-

tion of a chairman, put to it, and its vote taken on each; just as its vote is to be taken on any other question. But before proceeding to take the votes, the chairman should, of course, allow time for all the nominations likely to be made.

50. It is an awkward and unpleasant thing for a gentleman called upon to fill the office of chairman of a meeting, on the occasion of his first taking the chair, to have to make his way towards it unattended. No gentleman ought to be left in this situation, whether the meeting be large or small. On the election of the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Speaker elect is, with great propriety, accompanied, and handed to his chair, by the mover and seconder on his nomination. And something of this ought to be observed and practised, on ushering to his seat for the first time, the chairman of any company.

51. Thus far I have treated of cases in which the chairman is to be chosen by the

meeting on its assembling. And it is in such cases only, that precepts or advice can be required. The Mayor, or Bailiff, or Borough-reeve, or High Constable, presides, of right, in his Town-hall. The High Sheriff, at county meetings, and so forth. And these, being always selected men, and more or less of gentlemen; being men on whom the eyes of the public are rather permanently fixed, so that their conduct will be observed and remembered, they are, to the honour of our nature, with but very few exceptions, inclined to act impartially and well. And then, too, these officers have aids, such as other gentlemen have not; that is to say, aids, when they preside *ex officio*, and in their respective courts; they have their town clerks, and clerks of the peace, men of experience, and necessarily, men of ability too, in the conducting of public business; and, in addition to these advantages, these officers have authority, have power; which, although seldom or never, on such occasions, called into exercise, restrains, in the most salutary manner, by its known

existence, and checks the least inclination to irregularity or disorder. It is desirable always to have public meetings thus conducted.

52. But there are cases in which meetings are convened, and the intended chairman is named in the requisition, or document, by which the meeting is convened. Such meetings are, of course, the result of some previous meeting, great or small, at which this appointment of chairman, and other arrangements have been made. All this is very proper, desirable, and even necessary, in the case of a large meeting; as stated in paragraphs 31 and 32. To such previous appointment of a chairman there could be no reasonable objection, even if it did not come recommended to us by its tendency to forward the business of the meeting; no reasonable objection, seeing that it is previously and openly announced.

53. It must be proper and desirable, on occasions of large meetings, to have the chair-

man previously appointed. Five hundred persons is, probably, as large an assemblage as can be expected, on the instant, to elect a chairman in a satisfactory manner; and it may, therefore, on all occasions on which a meeting is reasonably expected to exceed this number, be desirable for some smaller number, including the originators of the proceedings; it may, in such cases, be desirable and proper for some such body of persons, to select and appoint a chairman. The mode of doing which, ought, however, to be attended with at least all the observances and forms that are inculcated in paragraphs 45, 46, and 47; and ought, likewise, to be influenced by the considerations suggested in the few previous paragraphs, beginning with that numbered 39.

54. A smaller body may thus, with perfect propriety, and indeed, very laudably, take upon itself to appoint a chairman to a larger body of persons. And this it may do, either in time to have it duly announced, previously to the

assembling of the larger body, or just at the moment appointed for the commencement of business; such smaller body being assembled, and known to be assembled, in some contiguous and duly accessible place; and known, indeed, by the great body of the meeting, to be so assembled, for the purpose of making this and other arrangements for the orderly and efficient conduct of the meeting.

55. One word here as to the PRINCIPLE on which this and all the other rules are laid down; the principle on which all proper rules and observances must be founded. This principle is, simply, JUSTICE; it is, in another word, EQUITY. That is to say, equality of right. A number of persons are called together, to deliberate, to resolve, to determine. If there be some previous arrangement, by which one man, in virtue of his office, or by due election, shall preside; and if, as in cases of shareholders, some of the parties assembling are, by due and previous agreement, to have two or

more votes, whilst others are to have only one; if there be cases of this kind, there can be no inequity in such appointed officer or chairman taking his place; nor any in the larger holders having a plurality of votes; because, as predicated, all has been duly and previously arranged and appointed. But where no such arrangement or appointment has been made or agreed to; where a meeting is called without any previous and explicit distinction of persons and of powers, all are to be understood as equal; that is, equal in point of rights. In this state of things, every man who has a right to be present, and, of course, every man who comes within the description of the requisition has such right; every such man has a right, and an equal right with any other man, to assist in the nomination of a chairman, or to be himself nominated and elected; and, of course, an equal right to make, and to second, and to vote for or against, motions and amendments. THIS IS THE PRINCIPLE, THIS IS THE RULE. And on the due observance of this PRINCIPLE throughout the

whole of its proceedings must the peace, and the order, and the final success of every meeting depend.

56. Nor is there the slightest reason for any rational or just man to wish that it were otherwise. Are we to be told that there is a difference in the education, in the understanding, in the rank and station, and in the moral and intellectual qualities of men; and that, on this account, they ought not to be equally treated; is this the plea for distinctions, for preferences, and for exclusions, at meetings such as these of which we are treating? Show me your gauge for measuring, for ascertaining the exact worth, the intellectual rank of men; and for exhibiting with precision the estimation in which a man is held, and that in which he ought to be held, by his neighbours and his fellow countrymen; show me this gauge, and then will I consider of the plea for distinctions and exclusions.

57. But, indeed, we have this gauge. And we see it applied as completely as human infirmities and prepossessions will permit us to apply it, in the case of a public meeting. It is indubitable, that when any man offers himself, for any purpose, to the attention of an assemblage of his neighbours, that assemblage applies the gauge. It takes into consideration all his qualities and pretensions, and, bating that leaning towards the possessors of wealth, and power, and established reputation, to which we are all of us prone, it generally forms a tolerably accurate estimate of a man. At all events, this is the best gauge we have. The decision is apt to be greatly in favour of the influential and the educated; and he who wants more than this for them, must be unjust and unreasonable.

58. So much for the principle on which we ought, and indeed, on which, if we would preserve the peace and order, and secure any good effects from a meeting, so much for the prin-

ciple on which, throughout the whole of the affair, we must proceed; that is to say, a principle of equity towards every man duly entitled to be present. And he who hesitates to conform to this principle, he who, regardless of other men's rights and feelings, will not listen to, does not choose to appreciate other men's reasonings; or who, in the arrogance of his heart, will not tolerate a decision contrary to his own previously-formed wishes; he who goes not to deliberate, but to domineer, ought not to present himself in any assembly such as we are here treating of. To resume:

59. We left our subject with paragraph 54, in which the appointment of a chairman to a large meeting, by a smaller preparatory meeting, had been considered and concluded. The chairman, then, is selected and appointed. The next step to be taken is to introduce him to the larger meeting, and to install him in his office; which may be done with great propriety and

effect by a brief address from some gentleman who is acquainted with the merits and the fitness of the chairman elect. And this, may we not venture to pronounce, is the only occasion on which a speech of any description can with propriety be addressed to a meeting, previous to the installation of its chairman, and to its consequent organization.

OF THE CHAIRMAN:

THE REQUISITE POWER, AND THE DUTIES OF HIS OFFICE.

60. These duties, when a discussion is to be carried on, when motions are to be made, and amendments moved, and eager speakers are to be restrained, and sometimes turbulent auditors to be ruled; these duties are not within the scope of every man. And yet when we call to mind the considerations by which assemblages of men often seem to be guided in the selection of a chairman, we might very fairly conclude that this office, one of the most difficult that a man can be called on to sustain, is in their estimation, the very easiest thing in life. However, it is not our business to expatiate on the difficulties, but to remove, or to surmount them.

61. The chairman ought in reality to have a chair, and this chair ought, if the assemblage be of any considerable number, to be raised, and by all means so placed as to detach in some

slight degree this gentleman, who is on every occasion to be observed; who is to be first addressed; who is to be appealed to first and last by every speaker; whose rising is, on the instant, whatever is going forward, to be the signal for the most silent attention; who is, in fact, whatever he be in his individual and private character, now the selected depository of all the authority, and indeed, of all the dignity of the meeting. This gentleman, who ought never to be out of sight, ought by no means to be kept standing whilst others are speaking; this gentleman, whose mere rising from his seat is to command attention, ought, if practicable, by all means to have a chair raised and detached a little from all who are near to him. And this arrangement, although due to him, is not to be regarded as designed solely for the ease, and in compliment to the man, but as one of the requisite means for preserving the order of the assemblage.

62. How, indeed, is any man to preserve

this order amongst contending parties and rival speakers, unless he have this, and every other arrangement that can be devised, in order to make the office less difficult. He is but a man, like those around him; perhaps inferior in power of voice, and in personal appearance, to several about him; how, then, unless he be somewhat detached, distinguished, and upheld; how is he to preserve this order, amid the contentions of a debate?

63. There is a becoming disposition amongst us in these kingdoms to defer to the chairman; but then he must be A CHAIRMAN. He must not be one amongst a knot of men, surrounded by them, talking with them, scarcely visible to the greater number of persons present. How is any man, much less a multitude of men; how is any man of sense, of spirit, and of correct feeling, to submit himself, instantly, and with cheerfulness and respect: how is any man thus to submit himself, as he must and ever ought to do, to the chairman; but how is he to do

this, if that chairman be one of a cluster of men; some of them, possibly, rivals and opponents, and for any thing that even he or the meeting may know, caballing against him. The thing is not to be expected; is impossible.

64. Besides, for another important reason, the chairman is not to be spoken with, save by his secretary or clerk, and ought to hold none but indispensable communications even with him, during a debate. Setting aside the unseemliness of communicating, in private conversation, with individuals of the meeting, there must be always sufficient to occupy the whole mind of the chairman in the business of the meeting, the object of which he must keep constantly and clearly in view, so as to detect, and be ready to check on the instant, any, the slightest aberration from it. He is to know, is to see, and to hear, every thing that is going on; he is to bear in mind all that has passed, and to have a clear view of what remains to be done; so as to be able to suggest, with promptitude,

the next step to be taken, and thereby to keep the attention of the meeting to its purpose. To insure attention and order, he must himself set the example, and must listen with marked attention to every speaker. These things he must do, these he must be enabled to do; that he does them all, must be visible to the meeting of which he is chairman. And, how are all these things, so indispensable to the order of a meeting, how is any part of them possible, unless the chairman be somewhat detached from the persons composing the meeting?

65. With this arrangement the office of chairman becomes much less difficult than it would otherwise be. The gentleman appointed ought, as was before intimated, to be accompanied, or handed to his chair, by some one or two others; so that every one shall see and feel, that his taking upon himself the office, is not a piece of assumption on his part.

66. No gentleman will require to be reminded, that on taking the office of chairman, in a meeting in which different and opposing measures may be propounded; no gentleman will require to be reminded, that on taking such an office, he resigns all thoughts of promoting any particular views, or course of proceeding, to which he himself may be inclined. If a gentleman cannot thus resign his views, and there are cases in which a man ought not, his duty will be, to take the chair to which he is elected, and from that situation, to state to the meeting the obligation he is under to advocate, and to maintain a particular course of proceeding; to beg that they will select another chairman, during which selection he will gladly assist, by presiding. This is the course to be pursued by a man of honour. And it will greatly conduce to the order of the proceeding.

67. On entering on the duties of his office the chairman will have to address himself to

the meeting, very briefly, but distinctly adverting to the purpose for which it is assembled, and if there be a requisition, or other document, under which the meeting is convened, he will do well to read it; or if it be of any length, to cause it to be read, in a distinct and audible voice. After this, if it be not stated in the requisition, the chairman may, with great advantage, point to the course of proceeding intended to be pursued by the gentlemen who have convened the meeting, if he be informed of that course. And thus will the meeting have the whole matter before them. Whatever may be his opinions, or his wishes, with regard to the proposed measures, it will be his duty to abstain from the slightest expression of them, leaving the advocating of those measures, and the objecting to them, to the several speakers. If there be seats for the company, and they are not seated, it is highly expedient that the chairman require them to be so. And, if he think that some of them require instruction on this head, it will be equally expedient in him

to request, that gentlemen will keep their seats during the business of the meeting, save when they rise to speak, and that they will, each gentleman, on the conclusion of whatever he may have to say, instantly resume his seat, affording thereby, without hesitation, a fair opportunity for any other gentleman to rise. Observations of this kind, according to the taste and judgment of the chairman, concluding with a recommendation to the meeting to give a patient hearing to the several speakers, will form a very suitable prelude to the business of the meeting. On resuming his seat, the chairman, both now, and on every other occasion, intimates his intention that the business of the meeting should proceed.

68. A proposition or motion will now, of course, be submitted to the meeting, and this proposition, accompanied by such observations as he may choose to offer, being read by the mover, and then handed up to the chairman, it becomes the duty of that gentleman to see that

it be seconded, to which end, unless some person have instantly intimated his wish so to do, the chairman should ask, "Does any one second this motion?"

69. The method of doing this in the House of Commons is most convenient, and quite worthy of imitation. On receiving a motion the Speaker of the House, who is chairman, asks the question, as stated above, and it is sufficient that the member who designs to be the seconder, raise his hat, looking towards the chairman, who then declares him to be the seconder. Having the motion thus moved and seconded, the Speaker or Chairman reads the motion, and it is then fairly before the House for discussion. The seconder, who has merely in silence intimated his desire to be seconder of the motion, may now, or at any time afterwards, speak in support of the motion. Such is the method practised in the House of Commons, and it is well suited for a debate carried on within the limits of a moderate sized room.

70. If no person present himself as seconder of a motion, there is instantly an end of it; but as soon as a motion is seconded, the chairman ought to read it, or cause it distinctly to be read, which being done, it becomes regularly a subject for debate, for opposition, or for amendment.

71. The business standing thus, if, after a reasonable pause, no objector present himself, the chairman will proceed to put the motion to the meeting, taking the votes for it, and then against it, in the manner usual at meetings of the same description; that is, by a show of hands, or by taking the vote of each person, for or against the motion.

72. If, however, an objection to the MOTION, or ORIGINAL MOTION, as the first is called; if an objection to this motion be raised, that objection must take one of the following shapes:—it must be an AMENDMENT; or it must go to NEGATIVE the motion; or it must

go to POSTPONE the further consideration of the motion; or it may be for the PREVIOUS QUESTION; or lastly, it may be a motion to ADJOURN the meeting. And it is a duty incumbent on the chairman to see that the objector shape his course distinctly to one of these ends. If the objector do not, pretty early in his speech, disclose to the assembly to which of these ends he is addressing himself, the chairman may, with great propriety, rise and question him as to that end. For the time, the attention, and the patience of a number of men are not to be trifled with, and their purposes frustrated, by indefinite and aimless harangues. The chairman, I say, under such circumstances, may thus rise, and enquire as to the course intended to be pursued. But he will, doubtless, use his judgment as to this point. If the speaker be listened to with eager attention by a part of the meeting, and with patient attention by a decided majority, then there will be no propriety in interrupting him; for such attention is the best test of his being right. It is, in

short, to save the meeting from a waste of its time, and a trespass on its temper, that the chairman, in a case of this kind, is to interfere. And he will do it, of course, with all due courtesy and firmness, when required.

73. Of the several modes, above specified, of raising an objection to a motion, it is of the utmost importance that we obtain a clear understanding. So let us treat of them severally in due order.

74. But, first, of an ORIGINAL MOTION. It is incumbent on the chairman to see that every proposition or motion have for its object the furtherance of the purpose or purposes for which the meeting is expressly assembled. A motion, even an original motion, may be framed on an oversight, or in error, with regard to such purpose or purposes. In this, as in other cases, it is the duty of the chairman to be vigilant; and if such an error occur, he ought to point it out.

75. However, this, after all, may be only matter of individual opinion, as every proposition is to be regarded, until it have been determined on by a vote of the meeting. The chairman may misapprehend the motion; or he may even be under some error with regard to the express purpose of the meeting. Either of these is possible—but we ought to be very careful in admitting, and in acting on such a presumption. However, it is possible that the chairman, in objecting to a motion on this ground, may be in error; in which case, with becoming deference to his office, he may be reasoned with. If his objection be not removed, then will it be his duty to set such erroneous motion aside; or if susceptible of correction, to have it corrected. If, however,—and it is, of course, possible,—if the chairman be, in such a case, manifestly, and in the opinion of a majority, or near a majority, in error, and his error be not removed, then ought he, as due to himself, and to the meeting, to entreat that meeting to select another chairman, and thus

to permit him to resign an office, in which no man ought to be called on to do anything, nor to suffer any thing to be done, which he does not deem perfectly consonant to order. What has been just stated, with regard to the course to be pursued by a chairman, in the case of an original motion, is equally applicable to an amendment on a motion.

76. Second, of an AMENDMENT on a motion. This, as the term imports, is designed by its mover, as an *improvement* on a previous motion. There are cases in which we may very properly entertain a wish that nothing should be done; cases in which we may not only be opposed to a motion just made, but altogether opposed to anything of the nature of such a motion; opposed to any step whatever being taken in any such direction; and, indeed, opposed to any movement whatever. In a case of this kind we do not propose an amendment; but object to, argue against the motion, and seek to persuade the meeting to reject it. We do not

move, "*as an amendment,*" that the step proposed in the foregoing motion be NOT taken; nor that the motion be REJECTED. We do not, in such a case, make a motion of any description; but, as before stated, we argue against the motion. There can, in short, be no motion, properly framed, to put a *direct negative* on any thing. Motions, propositions of any sort, must never be in the *negative*, but always in the *affirmative* form. They must always affirm that something IS, or SHALL BE: never the contrary. And it is part of the duty of the chairman to see that all motions be put in this proper form.

77. An amendment, then, like an original motion, must be in the affirmative form; and professing, as it does, to be an improvement on such motion, it ought, ostensibly at least, to be shaped towards the same end; unless, indeed, that in the opinion of the mover of the amendment, the original motion be not conformable to the purpose of the meeting, in which case he may, on that ground, offer his amendment,

for the avowed purpose of superseding that motion altogether.

78. Third. Sufficient has been said in the last paragraph but one, on the mode of proceeding in order to put a negative on a motion. Of the methods of resisting the adoption of a motion, as enumerated in paragraph 72, the *third* is, by a motion for POSTPONING its consideration; the meaning of which is too obvious to require a word of explanation.

79. Fourth. Of THE PREVIOUS QUESTION. A motion to this effect is resorted to in order to set aside a motion without either amendment, postponement, negation, or further discussion thereon. There are propositions which we may deem useless, or unwise, but which we cannot absolutely pronounce to be unsuitable and irrelevant to the purpose of the meeting, and which, therefore, the chairman cannot take upon himself to prohibit, and put down. The motion for the *previous question* is a contrivance

to get rid of a proposition of this sort, without either calling on the chairman to do so ungracious a thing as to prohibit its discussion, or on the meeting to vote upon it. It is, in short, a contrivance to elude the further discussion of a proposition. Its nature is this. A motion being made, and seconded, is to be put to the vote, if no person rise to oppose it. Well, no person may be willing to place himself in the situation of an opponent to such a proposition. For it may affirm a series of undeniable truths, but lead to no practical result; and it is for results that men meet in debate; or it may be irrelevant to the purpose or purposes of the meeting, and yet have a semblance of propriety, so as to make its impropriety questionable; or, lastly, it may be incomprehensible, nonsensical, or absurd.

80. Now a man of sense and spirit does not like to place himself in opposition to a proposition such as any of these which we have supposed. And yet he, and, as he may perceive

a majority of the meeting, may wish to get rid of it. The step then to be taken is, to move "the previous question;" which question, although never directly put, save in an emergent case of this kind, is always understood to have been put and carried in the affirmative, previous to a meeting entering on the discussion of any motion whatever. And the moving of "the previous question" is the moving "That this meeting do now proceed with the discussion of the motion before it." The mover of this being desirous that the meeting should decide that it will not so proceed, and in conformity with this desire, he votes against his own motion, seeking thereby to throw out the objectionable proposition.

81. For the clear understanding of this nice, and sometimes very useful expedient in a debate, let us here suppose a case for its application. Let us suppose that a proposition is offered, or a motion made and seconded by persons whose competency to make motions is

unquestionable; let us suppose that such motion has no such obvious irregularity or inaptitude about it, as to authorise the chairman of the meeting to pronounce that it is improper, and so to set it aside. Well, such a motion or proposition is before a meeting; we have supposed that it is, in the apprehension of some member of the meeting, liable to some of the objections above stated, and that he is, therefore, desirous of setting it aside, not only without a vote being taken upon it, but without any further waste of time in the discussion of it. Such member may then, with propriety, state some of his objections to it, and move "*the previous question*" thereon; which motion, on being seconded, but not else; on being seconded, the chairman ought, without further discussion, to put to the meeting, somewhat in these words:—"The motion before the meeting is"—*(here he should recite the original motion)*.—"It is now moved that we proceed with the discussion of this motion; those who are for so proceeding will signify such desire

in the usual way; and those who desire the contrary." By this mode of proceeding may a meeting at any time, in a regular and orderly manner, and without throwing the ungracious office on its chairman, set aside a motion which it may deem useless, or otherwise unworthy of discussion. "The previous question," however, as above intimated, must wait its turn ere it be moved. The motion against which it may be employed, besides being moved, must be seconded, and put to the meeting, by being read from the chair. Because, until this be done, "the previous question" is premature, is unnecessary, is out of order.

82. Fifth, and last. A motion to ADJOURN. This may be made at any time, and may be again, and again, repeated, only with some little variation as to the time to which it may be proposed to adjourn. Nor is it an easy matter to devise a rule by which the repetition of such a motion can be restrained, without subjecting a meeting to very great inconveniences.

The usual restraint, the obligation not to make a motion for an adjournment lightly and inconsiderately, or for factious purposes, consists in the great responsibility, in the odium to which the mover would subject himself, unless countenanced by the general sense of the public. But this odium, this responsibility, is generally sufficient, and is the chief, or only security for orderly conduct in any part of the conduct of a public meeting.

83. Thus, then, have we before us the several motions, and forms of motions, which any member, and every member, entitled to be present at a meeting, has a right to make; and that which each individual has a right to do, it is the business, and the duty of the chairman, to protect him in the performance of.

84. Is it necessary to observe that these rights are little liable to be abused? They never, in fact, are abused. Our countrymen are but too diffident of themselves, to be troublesome

in making superfluous motions. And no one will call in question the salutary nature of these rights, save persons of peevish and ungovernable tempers, who would have everything their own way. However, salutary or not, the rights do exist, and must exist, when a number of men are assembled for the purpose of debating on any proposition ; and there can be no order unless all parties be equally protected and aided by the chairman, in the fair exercise of these rights.

85. But these are rights to make motions merely. Every individual entitled to take part in the proceeding, that is to say, entitled to be present, and to vote, is fully entitled to make motions, and to second motions, provided that such motions be conformable to the rules just laid down. But the making of speeches; the occupying of the time and attention of a meeting by making speeches, is another affair. Here, each man must make his own way to the favour, and to the attention of a meeting.

And the meeting ought to be allowed to choose whether it will hear him or not. It must be the duty of a chairman to forbid partial, and envious, and preconcerted interruptions of a speaker; but if a whole meeting have a distaste either for the man, or for his manner of speaking, or for the matter of his speech, it can never be the duty of a chairman to insist on their listening. The meeting ought to be allowed to choose whom, and what it will listen to, in the way of speaking; and has a right, must have a right, to express its approbation, or its disapprobation, in any manner it may please.

86. It is partial and preconcerted interruptions only that a chairman ought to repress; without being called upon to obtain a hearing for a tedious, incapable, or otherwise distasteful speech. But a motion is another matter. A man who cannot obtain attention as a speaker, may move a proposition; and it must be the duty of the chairman to protect him in this

right, and to treat his motion with quite as much respect and attention, as he would treat that of the most eloquent and favourite speaker.

87. I am supposing, of course, that a motion thus offered is duly adapted to the purposes of the meeting, and that it is—if amounting to anything more than a simple proposition to postpone a decision, to adjourn a meeting, or something equally brief and clear—I am supposing that—if it be a motion requiring many words—it shall be handed to the chairman, duly and clearly written out; and then, being conformable to the purpose or purposes of the meeting, and to the business then in hand, it must be the duty of the chairman to receive it, and to put it to the meeting, as he would put any other proposition. For inability to make a speech, or inability to obtain a hearing, arise from what cause they may, can in no respect be regarded as disqualifying a man for making motions. To return :—

88. A motion, being fully submitted to a meeting, that is to say, being moved, seconded, and read or recited by the chairman, can no longer be deemed the mere proposition of the mover and the seconder, to be, at their pleasure, and at any time, withdrawn by them. On the contrary, it is become a sort of property of the meeting. There is no knowing, without a vote, who may be for it, nor who against it. It may be the pleasure of the meeting, or of a part of the meeting, to pronounce its opinion on the proposition; and having submitted it, the mover and seconder are not competent to withdraw it, save with the unanimous consent of the meeting.

89. A motion being thus fully before a meeting, if no objector present himself, may be put to the vote, without further speaking; although there can be no irregularity in a third or fourth speaker offering reasons in its support. But, no objection to the motion being raised, neither mover nor seconder ought again to

speak, save in explanation of some error. But if an objector appear, if a debate arise, then may the mover speak a second time; or his seconder, as I apprehend, if no member object to it, may, without impropriety, speak as the mover; such speaking to be strictly confined to a reply to objections stated; to explanations, as before spoken of; and to a summing up of the arguments previously used in support of the motion. No new matter ought to be suffered to originate in this second speech. For if it were, the whole debate would be re-opened, and the objectors to the motion would manifestly be entitled to answer such new matter, and to bring forward new arguments, and second thoughts, on their parts also; and thus would there be no end to a question.

90. This right of reply, as it is termed, exists in the mover of an original proposition; but belongs not to the mover of an amendment, whose movement altogether, both speech and motion, is in opposition, is in answer to the

original motion, and to the speech or speeches made in its support. There must be limits to a debate. Men who do not make speeches must not be kept in unlimited attendance on those who do; nor must speakers be permitted, by repeated answers, by replies, and rejoinders, to degenerate into mere wranglers. The rule is,—one speech for each man, if he please, on each motion, and no more; save to the mover of an original proposition; whose second speech is, also, to be kept from new matter, from second thoughts in favour of his motion, save such thoughts as clearly apply in answer to objections just made to his proposition. It is, of course, the duty of the chairman liberally to interpret and to apply this rule.

91. With regard to the time of commencing the reply. This, as almost every other step, ought to be entered upon with a becoming regard to the convenience of the meeting. When a number of men are assembled on business, that business ought to be done with

promptitude, with spirit, but with due attention to order. There ought to be no loitering, nor any indecent haste. So the time for the mover to rise, and to commence his reply, is when a pause occurs in the debate, when no person appears eager to make objections; or when a meeting, impatient to come to a close, calls for an end to the debate. In either of these cases the chairman will handsomely fulfil his duty by turning his eyes towards the person who made the original motion, thereby signifying to him, that he is ready to hear anything which such person may have to say in reply.

92. The debate being ended, by the reply, or by the person who is entitled to reply declining to exercise his right; without permitting any further speeches, or amendments, the chairman ought to proceed to put the question, as it is called; that is, to take the vote of the meeting: which vote he, of course, takes in the manner that is usual at meetings of the same description; commonly by a show

of hands. But if there be a dispute or uncertainty about the decision, it must become his duty to divide the meeting, and, if necessary to a satisfactory decision, to have the persons on each side counted or polled.

93. It is a question of no small importance, not whether a chairman shall vote at all, but at what period of the proceedings he shall vote. And this question is become one of increased importance, in consequence of a recent act of Parliament, (the Poor-Law amendment act,) which lays down a rule on this point; which rule, as I confidently expect to prove, is very inexpedient and unjust. That act lays it down, that the chairman of a board of guardians shall have the privilege of voting, first with other members, and then, if the votes happen to be even, that he shall have a casting vote, as it is called, in addition to the first vote.

94. Now, is it not obvious that in a case of this kind, when the voting proves even on each

side, the chairman having voted; is it not obvious that had he withheld such vote, the meeting would be in no such dilemma; and that the casting vote, as a remedy, would not be required? But the chairman ought to have his vote, we shall be told. Certainly; but where is the justice, where the decency, of giving to him, who of all persons present ought to be exemplary and impartial,—where the decency or the justice of giving to him, two votes? For unless he have two, the first vote, as we shall presently see, can be of no value, can produce no effect, save such as would be more graciously produced by a mere casting vote.

95. If the chairman, on the votes being first taken, throw in his vote along with the rest, that vote, if it produce any other effect, can do only one of three things; it will either add one to an ineffective minority, needlessly swell an already sufficient majority, or make the two sides even, producing what is called a tie.

96. Now it can scarcely be alleged, that to require the chairman to suspend his vote, and this is all that either the justice of the case, or the dignity of his office requires; it can scarcely be said, that to require him to suspend or reserve his vote, until he see that it will be effective, rather than by prematurely throwing it in amidst the mass of votes, to produce one of the above-named useless or ungracious acts, is to require him to forego any privilege, or to surrender any right. In authorizing the chairman to reserve his vote, and to exercise it when its worth is not doubtful, when its exercise is seen on all hands to be the instrument and harbinger of victory; thus to be authorized, is a privilege, not a deprivation; and it is a privilege which can be honourably used and enjoyed only by the chairman who so defers the exercise of his rights, in order, if the occasion require it, to exercise that right with grace and effect. If, however, after all that has been said, the chairman may yet have two votes, the most becoming course for him to

pursue, in the exercise of them, would doubtless be, to throw in his two votes at once, and then, if there happen to be a tie, to withdraw one of them, and so dissolve the difficulty he had created.

97. The above course of reasoning, proving, as I presume, the inexpediency, injustice, and unseemliness of a chairman exercising his right to vote, save when that vote shall be decisive of the question; this reasoning, it is material to observe, applies only to the chairman of a meeting, the members of which are equal as to the right of voting. In meetings of shareholders, in which, by agreement, some have more votes than others, it is sufficiently evident that the chairman ought to have his right of putting in his vote or votes, along with the rest, and afterwards, if the occasion arise, of giving a casting vote. It must have been the obvious reasonableness and justice of allowing a chairman, in a case of this description, to vote a second time, that gave rise to the erron-

eous notion discussed in the three or four foregoing paragraphs, of its being admissible on all occasions.

98. To return to the taking of the votes: there must be no unfair proceeding in this part of the conduct of a meeting. There is a never-failing, and a most admirable disposition in the people of these kingdoms, to debate on their differences, to discuss their opposing claims; to meet for these purposes; and then, all parties who have a right, and who choose to be present, being assembled, to put the point in dispute amongst them to the vote; and then to yield to that vote, whether it be for or against them. This disposition in the great bulk of the people never fails us. And nothing in human nature can be more admirable, nothing more salutary. They think not of fighting. Come, say they, let us discuss the difference between us, and having duly and fairly done that, let us take the opinions of all the parties concerned, by a vote, and if we be outvoted,

we will yield. Men see things in different lights, their interests frequently oppose each other, therefore there will be differences of views, of opinion, and of feelings; but what can be more admirable than this disposition of our countrymen, thus fairly to discuss, and peaceably to settle those differences.

99. To ensure such peaceable settlement, however, the proceedings must be fair, must be equitable. Men must not thus be invited to meet, to discuss, and to vote, and then find that a little knot of people have predetermined what the decision shall be. Men who will yield with cheerfulness to a majority, become unruly when they find that they are assembled to be deceived, to be betrayed. This, of course, can never happen, save when the chairman is of the party who have predetermined the question, or when he through weakness, or through some culpable motive, lends himself to their unfair views. If the chairman do his duty; if, having accepted the office of chairman, he deal impar-

tially; if, having duly received motions, and had them debated, he proceed to ascertain on which side the majority stands, and give his decision accordingly; if he do all this, as a man of honour always will do, however discontented some of the minority may be, the greater part of them will acquiesce in his decision, all will respect, the majority will zealously support him, and order and good temper will reign over the meeting.

100. But for a chairman to lend himself to the purposes of a party: what is it, but to pervert his office, and to betray the confidence which men are accustomed to repose in that office? The least evil arising from such a course of conduct is the discontent and turbulence usually attendant upon it. The ultimate and not very remote consequences of such behaviour on the part of a chairman, were it to become prevalent, would be to drive our brave, our generous, our just countrymen, from their habitual fairplay and confidence in each other;

to drive them from these, which, happily, are still a part of their nature; to drive them from their debating and their voting, into the use of the knife and the dagger.—To return to the course of business which the chairman has to perform, the details of which we left, in the taking of the vote, at paragraph 92.

101. If there be but one motion before the meeting, the chairman proceeds,—the debate being ended,—to take the votes, FOR and AGAINST that motion. But if there be an amendment on that motion, he first takes the votes for and against the amendment.

102. When there is a motion, and an amendment thereon, to be voted on, it is a common practice to take the vote simply for the amendment, and then that for the original motion, and so to decide the question between these two merely, in favour of that which has the greater number of votes. But this is by no means correct. For, although one of these motions

may have more votes than the other, it does not follow that it is to be adopted. A majority of the meeting may be averse to both, and may therefore have voted for neither. All ought to have an opportunity of voting; and to give them this opportunity, each motion must be put completely to the meeting, FOR and AGAINST. Thus—first, *for the amendment;* and then, *against the amendment.* When, if a majority be *for the amendment*, the question is settled; the amendment being carried, and the original motion voted out; but if a majority be against the amendment, then comes the voting *for*, and *against, the original motion:* and this may be out-voted likewise. It by no means follows that because two or three propositions are made to us, we must accept one of them. We *may*, very wisely, choose to remain as we are, rejecting every proposed alteration.

103. Such is the course of proceeding with respect to the putting of motions and amendments,—a course which, on account of its sim-

plicity or convenience, appears well adapted to meetings such as we have here treated of; and well calculated also to produce just and satisfactory results. This method, however, differs from that pursued in Parliament, where every word of a motion, being of moment, ought to be nicely weighed and adjusted to its purpose. Pity that the members have not the mind more frequently to avail themselves of the opportunity presented by their more exact rules, so nicely fitted to afford them the means of making their motions, their resolutions, and their enactments, correct and intelligible!

104. With regard to the method of putting motions, where no amendment is proposed, I have nothing further to add. But in our Houses of Parliament, where much experience and great acuteness in matters of this kind, as above intimated, have established the very best rules for the conducting of such affairs, the course of proceeding is of this nature. Be it borne in mind, that on undertaking to propose an amendment

on any gentleman's motion, both good manners and good policy require us to attempt no greater alteration than may be necessary. Hence it is the custom in Parliament, and it is proper so to act, when a member moves an amendment, to propose to alter no more of the words of the original motion than his purpose requires. And his method of proceeding is, to move that the words in the original motion to which he objects be left out, and that certain other words, being the words by which he proposes to amend the motion, be inserted in the place thereof.

105. All motions, it will be recollected, begin with that most useful pronoun, THAT. And so scrupulous is the custom in Parliament of retaining all that can be consistently retained of an original motion, that when an amendment is offered with a view to set such motion entirely aside, by the substitution of different words altogether, the initiatory word THAT is always proposed to be retained, and the words of

the amendment are proposed to be engrafted thereon.

106. The alteration contemplated by an amendment may be less extensive than this. It may, of course, be for the alteration of a part only of the words of the original motion. But whether the proposed amendment be partial or entire, the mode of proceeding in the treatment of it is the same.

107. An amendment being proposed in the manner just described; that is, that certain words of an original motion be left out, and certain others inserted in the place thereof, and such amendment being seconded, it is put, or read, from the chair, and may be debated on like any other motion, save that the mover thereof is not entitled to reply, as is the mover of an original motion. The debate having ceased, and the time for taking the votes arrived, the Speaker or Chairman, in the Commons, puts the question in this manner.

Having read the original motion, and the proposed amendment, the purport of which amendment, as he announces, is to leave out certain words, in order to insert the words of such amendment; he puts the question thus: "That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question; those who are for this motion, say *aye;* those who are against it, say *no.*" And, as the votes preponderate for the maintenance, or for the omission of said words, so does he declare that either the "AYES," or the "NOES," have it. And the motion "*That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question,*" is then recorded by the clerks, as having passed either in the "AFFIRMATIVE," or in the "NEGATIVE," as the case may be.

108. In the method thus described, it is observable that the question first put, contrary to the course usually adopted at more popular meetings, is on the original motion. I do not see that this is of material consequence. The parliamentary course is, I think, preferable, but

not so conspicuously better as to demand an alteration of the usual practice at such meetings. In Parliament, the original motion being, in effect, put before any amendment thus: "That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question," if the votes decide that they shall so stand, then is the amendment rejected. And the original motion standing unaltered, though not passed, the chairman proceeds immediately, without further debate, unless another amendment be offered, to take the votes on that "question;" which question is, "That the motion—*that is, the original one*—do pass."

109. If, on the contrary, however, the votes decide, that the words proposed to be left out shall not stand part of the question, then do the words of the amendment take their place, and stand, in all respects, as did the original motion; liable, like it, to be either amended or rejected. Whatever motion may be before the House, is open to any proposition for its amendment; but one amendment being moved, a second is not,

according to the custom of Parliament, to be entertained, until the ground be cleared by the rejection of either the original motion, or of the first amendment. But this regulation, which is very judicious, presents no material obstacle to the moving of a second amendment; for if a member have a desire so to do, he can, whilst the first amendment is under discussion, address the House, state his objections, and read or state to the House the substance of his intended proposition, thereby bespeaking its favourable attention; and in effect, though not in form, moving his projected amendment. It is, I conceive, manifest, that this method of offering a second amendment, in any meeting whatever, is much more eligible than the encumbering of a debate with three several propositions at a time; an occurrence, it is true, which does not very frequently happen.

110. It is scarcely necessary to observe, that a proposition to amend a motion, by striking or leaving out certain words therein, without the

substitution of other words, may be offered, with perfect regularity.

111. In the methods thus laid down may a number of motions, original, or amendments, be successively disposed of; and the rules laid down on this, and on all the other points, apply equally to large or to small meetings.

112. Having ascertained that the business of the meeting, and consequently the duties of the chairman are at an end, the chairman ought, with promptitude, to declare that the proceedings have terminated, and instantly to leave the chair; affording thereby an opportunity to the meeting to express its approbation or its disapprobation of his conduct.

113. Thus far have we looked only to the duties, and to the office, of a chairman of occasional or single meetings; without referring, to those of the chairman of a permanent society, council, or committee, which assembles

adjourns, and reassembles, at stated and appointed periods.

114. It must be merely on the reassembling of a meeting of this kind that there can now remain anything particular to observe on. On such occasion the chairman will have to refer to the minutes of the preceding meeting. Whether this assembling be a recurrence only of the ordinary and regular meetings, or the result of a special appointment, by adjournment or otherwise, it will, in the outset, be the business of the chairman to state; and then he will read, or cause to be read, from the minutes of former meetings, whatever may tend to lead the present into the business awaiting its attention.

115. There are one or two questions closely connected with this part of our subject yet to be spoken of, the first of which, in point of interest and of importance, is this.

116. Can a chairman who has made himself obnoxious to a meeting, or who has lost its confidence; can a chairman thus circumstanced be removed? And if he can; in what manner is it best to be done?

117. I answer, that I do not see how a chairman can, according to any rules of order, be forced out of his office, and another placed in his stead, and so the business of a meeting be carried forward. When a meeting is so unfortunate as to have a chairman who will not act impartially, he is little likely to listen to a proposition for his own removal, and for the election of another. Men ought, in the outset, to be careful whom they elevate to the office of chairman. But finding themselves hampered with a partial and perfidious person in that office, I know of no course that can be pursued, with a due regard to order, but that of determining to do no business under him. Let an adjournment, *sine die*, be moved. This may be done at any stage of the proceedings; and the

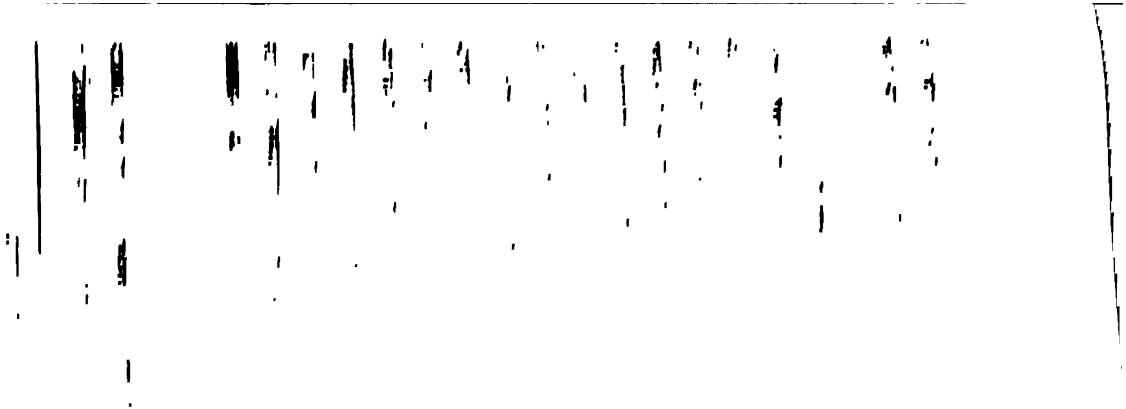
chairman must put such motion, on its being regularly moved and seconded, and take the votes on it without delay; or declining to do this, on any pretence whatever, he, in fact, declines to act as chairman; and all his subsequent proceedings become thereby invalidated: and must be held to be so by the law, if the law have anything to do with the proceedings. For it is indispensable to the correct proceeding of any deliberative assemblage, that every other matter give place to a motion for an adjournment. This rule is, and must remain absolute; or such meetings would be exposed to the grossest and most dangerous perversion of their purposes. Here, then, we have a method,—and this is one of the salutary uses of the motion for adjournment; here we have a method, though not efficient for the putting of an unworthy chairman out, and seating another in his place, yet here is a method of arresting, or of invalidating his proceedings. If he refuse, and decline to put the motion for adjournment, he refuses to act as chairman;

if he put the motion, and on taking the votes thereon, decide manifestly contrary to the majority, another adjournment may be instantly moved; and motions of this nature may be repeated, until the obnoxious chairman himself become weary of the contest.

118. This question sometime arises is there any occasion on which a person speaking may justly be interrupted by another person rising to address the chairman? This is a nice and important point. And I answer, that such interruption may with propriety take place. But the person offering the interruption takes upon himself the responsibility as to the propriety of the interruption. If he offer it improperly, he will incur the just disapprobation, the censure, the condemnation of the meeting. Such interruption can be proper only when a speaker is out of order; either making a proposition that is irregular in some particular, or wandering from the question before the meeting, or otherwise unnecessarily

consuming the time, or endangering or perverting the just and reasonable purposes of the meeting. It is an ungracious office to interrupt a person thus irregular: the chairman may be inattentive to the irregularity, or hoping it will soon terminate, may defer the exercise of his authority. In any case of this kind, an individual of quick discernment, and great zeal for the success of the proceedings, may with commendable spirit rise, and addressing himself to the chairman, may point out the irregularity. That may suffice to put a stop to it. But if it do not, the meeting will most probably express its opinion.

119. An individual thus offering himself to the attention of a chairman, in the middle of a speech, ought to be listened to, whilst he briefly points out what he conceives to be an irregularity. And the moment an individual thus rises, signifying, as he ought to do, that it is on a point of order, the person speaking ought, of course, to stop, awaiting the decision of the



designed for every individual member of a meeting. Let the chairman be the sole preserver of order. Any attempt to assist him in this part of his office, save by silent and respectful attention to him, must tend to create disorder. There are, certainly, extreme cases, in which it may become expedient for a meeting to expel from its body some ungovernable and disorderly individual: this is a case to which the rule just laid down does not apply. It is the privilege of the chairman alone to call to "ORDER." Let no other individual presume to utter the call. But let the meeting at all times be ready to enforce attention to the wishes, and to the commands of "THE CHAIR."

THE SPEAKER:

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR HIS GOVERNMENT.

122. This is the last and most pleasing part of the office I have ventured to undertake. As to a Speaker, he is merely one of a meeting, every member of which has a right to speak, and has duties to perform. We owe many services, we owe many duties to the society, and to the nation, of which it is our lot to be members. We owe, in fact, our best earthly services, and our highest and most animating duties to our country; and the performance of these duties in the particular communities and societies to which we belong, is the medium by which, in general, we are to perform our duty to our country.

123. When a meeting is called for the execution of any public business, a meeting at which we are entitled to be present, to which we are, by the terms of the requisition, invited; when a meeting is thus called, we are, and

ought to hold ourselves, in some measure responsible for whatever may take place at that meeting; and this, whether we attend or not If we attend, we are parties to all that is done, unless, to the utmost of our ability, we oppose it; and if we do not attend, we leave it to others, and acquiesce in whatever they may do, and we ought to be held responsible. Society, and nations, rest on this basis. We cannot shuffle off our duties to our country, any more than we can exonerate ourselves from those which we owe to our respective families; and he who says "I never attend to public affairs," merely says, "I never regard any of my public duties."

124. Thus it is our duty to interfere in public matters; but our duty, at the same time, to do it in an orderly and judicious manner. Mere spirit, or energy, or boldness, in public affairs, or talent either; these alone, although much to be admired, may do mischief. They may, and indeed, unless well regulated, they

will impede and obstruct the most judicious plans. Still they are useful; this boldness, this energy, this talent; they put the wiser plans of more reflecting men to the test; they bring forth the reasons on which such plans are founded; and they prevent that stupid stagnation of mind in which collusion and corruption find their harvest.

125. Of differences of opinion, of jealousy or distrust as to the designs of public men; nay, of "the strife of tongues" even, there is no good reason to complain. On the contrary, by a reasonable and just expression of such differences, or of such distrust, a wholesome state of society is evinced. It is the stagnant and quiet pool that becomes corrupt and noxious, whilst the waters that are agitated are ever sweet and salubrious.

126. Honest, and wise men also, when they come to debate, ever come with differing opinions. The proper course is, civilly, but

manfully, to state and to compare those opinions, and then to leave to the proper authority, whether that authority be a bench of magistrates or a majority of a meeting, to decide; and having that decision, whether we may think it right or wrong, whether it be agreeable or disagreeable to us, our proper course, our duty, is peaceably to yield to it; this, the only honest and honourable course. The man who enters a public meeting without having made up his mind so to yield to its decision, is like a man who would go to a gaming table, determined to take all that he could win, and to pay no losses. If indeed, there have been palpable fraud in the decision, although it may be wise to yield peaceably on the instant, we are not thereby precluded from making such exposure and resistance as we may afterwards have it in our power to make.

127. The rules which I would suggest for the guidance of a speaker are most of them to be gathered from the foregoing articles. There

are, first, the chief points to be observed in the assembling, and in the attending on a public meeting; next there are those by which a chairman may be selected and installed in his office; and then come considerations on the powers and the duties of this important officer. In all of these the man who interferes at all ought to take an interest, and if the occasion arise, he ought to take a part. He ought at all times to be ready, and when requisite, he ought to lend his aid in maintaining the just authority of the chairman; and this he will best do by the most respectful attention, and, except in extreme cases, by the most implicit obedience to that officer,—to slight whom is almost always to be regarded as an affront to the whole meeting.

128. To the article, then, on the requisite power and the duties of the chairman, as containing most of the rules for the government of the body of a meeting; to this article, commencing with paragraph 60, I must refer the

speaker. And before I go into other particulars, in addition to the suggestions there inculcated, I would recommend to him the absolute necessity, for the maintenance of order, of a courteous demeanour towards his opponents, whatever or whoever they may be. Discourteous looks, or airs, or tones, or words, put an end to debate, and are, therefore, at all times, disorderly. When men meet in debate, as the most hostile parties frequently have occasion to do, whatever feuds exist between them ought to remain, during such meeting, in a state of perfect abeyance.

129. Another source of disorder is strictly to be avoided. Offensive as must ever be hostile looks or words, they are scarcely so offensive, and therefore scarcely so disorderly, as must be the imputation of unworthy motives to any person who may take part in a debate. It is possible that the actuating motive to some deed, or course of conduct, of other parties, may form a substantial part of the matter in debate: but

the motive of any man, whether good or bad, for the part which he may then take, never can with propriety be introduced. When men meet in debate, whatever may be their opinions of each other's character or motives, it is indispensable to the preservation of order, that they treat each other with a certain degree of respect and courtesy; and the principles and reputation, therefore, of no man, become compromised by a strict observance of this rule towards every one. An observance, indeed, which never can lower, but must rather tend to exalt the character of any man. In debates, such as these of which we are treating, the motives of a person taking part in the proceeding, never can be a proper topic of discussion. It is his propositions, if he make any; his statements, his arguments. If these be bad, let us show them to be so: if good, what rational objection can be founded on any motive by which he may be supposed to be actuated?

130. It is proper, before we advance to take

part in a debate, that we see pretty clearly that there is occasion for our interference; that we see that the meeting is liable to decide erroneously, for the want of some information, or some argument which we possess. The occasion need not be very pressing, certainly, in order to justify a man in taking this part. Somebody there must be to move and second propositions; and it may be an act of very commendable civility in any man to comply with a request made to him to perform offices of this kind; all that we ought to deprecate, is the making of speeches, or the eking them out beyond the necessity of the case, from the mere vanity of speaking. Bear in mind that you are only one in the meeting, that others have to speak; that not only may the meeting be impatient to hear those others, the gratification of which desire you may entirely frustrate, if you prolong your speech, but bear in mind, also, that whilst no one can be strictly sensible of the lapse of time whilst he himself is speaking, every man who may be waiting to speak,

is impatiently counting that time; and in that impatience, is reckoning every moment ten-fold.

131. Do not forget that you are to make but one speech on one question; at least, that in any subsequent explanation, or even in a reply, you are not to originate any new argument or other new matter. Be careful, therefore, to summon your facts and arguments, and arrange them in the best manner you can, when you first rise to speak. For if anything, however material, occur to you afterwards, you must be content to leave it unsaid, or to get it stated by some other speaker. The best arrangement of your matter is generally the order in which it rises in your own mind. But to deliver it in this order is the difficulty. However, a well-regulated and well-stored mind can scarcely go wrong. With a mind so provided, being master of the subject, a man, however unused to public speaking, has only to make a beginning, and he can scarcely fail to acquit himself well.

132. Degrade not yourself, nor your cause, by calling on your hearers to yield to any thing, save to facts and to arguments. Why are we called upon to debate; why to reason, if we must, after all, yield to influence, or to entreaties? Neither do you ever pray for unanimity. It is a low party device, calculated to deceive no one. It is never asked but by the weaker party; weaker in argument, if not in numbers; but almost always weaker in both. It is, in fact, always a prayer in favour of error, of falsehood, of injustice. Truth and justice will always disdain to stoop to such means, or to compromises of any description. Why do we meet to debate, why are we called upon to argue the matter; and why are we to vote at all, if we be to vote only on one side of the question? or be to vote, in compliance with the entreaties or the influence of a party, for a modification of truth and falsehood, for a palpable mixture of sense and nonsense? No; listen to suggestions; consider them: but be wary of yielding to any proposition for a com-

promise. And neither countenance nor tolerate any artifice or contrivance designed to blind or to mislead a meeting in order to carry a question. That is dishonesty. No man is bound, in cases in which others are to be consulted, to carry the most salutary of measures. No man is bound to dishonour himself by plotting and intriguing. It is sufficient; he duly acquits himself of his duty, if he propose and zealously support that which is right. Propose therefore the best measure you can devise. Support it with all due regard to order; but with all the resources and vigour of your mind. See who is for it, and who against it; and if it must be impaired, or rejected, let it be done by other hands, and not by yours. This is the method by which to collect the good sense, and the just and generous decision of a meeting. Any other mode of proceeding, is but a method of deluding it, or of collecting its nonsense,—its selfishness,—its baseness.

THE END.

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